

**Response to PBA Consultation Paper on Registration Standards**  
**27 October 2009**

Like many others I am concerned at the very brief time provided for people to provide feedback, particularly for a document whose contents have far reaching implications for the profession. At the same time, there are certainly positive elements to the proposal. In particular, I am certainly not opposed to the notion of the establishment of a Psychology Board of Australia to oversee registration standards and other matters. It certainly has many advantages over the current system.

I strongly oppose the development of specializations as outlined in the report. They are not applicable to private practice. I will use myself as an example as I believe my practice is fairly typical of many others. I have been in private practice working as a Psychologist since I was registered in 1987. Prior to that I lectured in Psychology and Human Development at the University. I run a very busy practice, work with people with diagnosis of depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and other forms of anxiety. I work with people who experience chronic pain. I work with people who are recovering from head injury. I work with people who have been diagnosed with various learning disabilities. I help support parents who have children with Autistic Disorders. I undertake therapy with a number of young clients who have been diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder. I am regularly asked to provide various Psychological Assessment Reports including Medico Legal Reports. I work with both young people and adults. I am continually attending Conferences, Workshops and Professional Courses. What could my specialization be?

I, like most in private practice do not fit easily into a specialization. I work clinically. I work in counselling, health and educational areas. I also do some forensic work. Specializations provided in the PBA Consultation Paper might reflect the structure of accredited Post Graduate Programmes but they do not reflect the way in which private practice is divided up in the real world.

I should add that the current title of "Clinical Psychologist" often has little to do with the person's expertise or the nature of their practice. At present it often just reflects what graduate programs a person has completed and whether a person is able to obtain a high Medicare Rebate.

I am strongly of the opinion that there should be one general registration of Psychologists. The division between general registration and specialist registration seems to reflect a medical model (ie. general practitioner and specialists). I do not believe this hierarchical specialist model is applicable to psychology. The model presumes that somebody working in a specialised area has more refined skills. I would strongly question this presumption. I am strongly of the opinion that dividing the profession into specializations would be of an enormous detriment to the profession. Divisions will reduce opportunities for Psychologists and reduce cross fertilization of ideas within the profession. It is my view that these are titles which are likely to add more confusion to the public rather than add any further clarification. The main beneficiaries of the specialization model that has been described in the PBA Consultation Paper are University Post Graduate Programs.

I am not against requiring a 6 year programme for registration as a Psychologist. However, I do believe that the current paper places far too much emphasis on initial qualifications. I am not convinced that completing a PhD will necessarily make somebody a better Psychologist. I completed my own PhD at a time when I was lecturing at the University. My understanding of a PhD is to provide initial training for those wishing to pursue a career in research. I strongly support the need for ongoing education for Psychologists. I would also strongly support the Competency Process that has been developed in South Australia by the Institute of Private Practicing Psychologists. I would also be hopeful that present arrangements would allow for Psychologists such as myself with extensive experience to continue with their existing rights. There is a tendency often with new arrangements to discount people who have learned through ongoing involvement in professional programmes and experience over many years.

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